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ABSTRACT

Several features of Beeby's model (1966) of the development of educational systems in developing countries served as the theoretical basis for the Malaysian Teacher Education Project (MTEP). These features include: the qualitative aspects of teaching, a focus on qualitative change, an emphasis on the realistic rate of such change in practice, and the pivotal role of the classroom teacher as the primary change agent. This project involved a select group of 12 Malaysian students who obtained undergraduate degrees through the secondary teacher education program at Brock University (Canada). A key component of the program was a practicum involving student teaching at selected schools in Malaysia. Both the classroom component and the practicums were jointly designed by education faculty from Brock and the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Although the program enjoyed success on several fronts, situational and cultural factors produced some complications and problems, such as resistance to change from within the school system. The results of this attempt to prepare capable teachers who are motivated to introduce change at the classroom level has several implications for future collaborative efforts in cross-cultural teacher education. (IAH)

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CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY

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"Reformers have the idea that change can be achieved by brute sanity". George Bernard Shaw.

This paper outlines a cross-cultural experiment in teacher education which embodied a high degree of professional collaboration. The early work of Beeby (1966) on the stage theory of the development of educational systems in developing countries served as the theoretical basis for the project which involved a select group of Malaysian students enrolled in a B.A./B.Ed. degree program at Brock University. Beeby contends that teacher ability, defined both in terms of formal educational background and the quality of professional in-service, is the major driving force behind the capacity of developing educational systems to move from one developmental stage level to the next higher level. Selective change processes described by Beeby at each level provide useful bench-marks for enhancing the quality of education in developing countries, leading ideally to the highest level, Stage IV, which he termed 'meaning'. Beeby focused on the qualitative aspects of teaching and on qualitative change, the emphasis on the realistic rate of such change in practice, and the pivotal role of the classroom teacher as the primary change agent. These features were central to the Malaysian Teacher Education Project (MTEP) discussed here which involved considerable collaboration between Canadian and Malaysian educators.

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The next section provides a brief overview of Beeby's model. This is followed by a description of the MTEP in the context of the existing Malaysian educational system. A final section addresses the implications of such collaborative ventures in cross-cultural teacher education for future consideration.

Stages of Educational Development

Schools in less developed countries (LDCS) in Beeby's model are characterized in terms of four stages, Dame School, Formalism, Transition and Meaning, as described in Figure 1. As a system evolves through the stages, schools become less rigid (i.e. less external control is exercised on the schools), teachers less formal in teaching style, discipline less authoritarian, and the curriculum and textbooks less prescriptive. Corresponding to these changes, student learning becomes more meaningful, the classroom more student-centred, and the school more self-directed.

Beeby viewed a system's progress through the four stages as essentially sequential and evolutionary:

> "there are certain stages of growth which all school systems must pass; although a system may be helped to speed up its progress, it cannot leap-frog a stage or major portion of a stage". (Beeby, 1966)

Although Beeby's original hypothesis was directed towards elementary school systems in LDCS, his stages of development are also seen to encompass aspects of secondary education in developing countries (Beeby, 1980). His theoretical framework is therefore

Beeby's Model — Stages in the Growth of a Primary School System

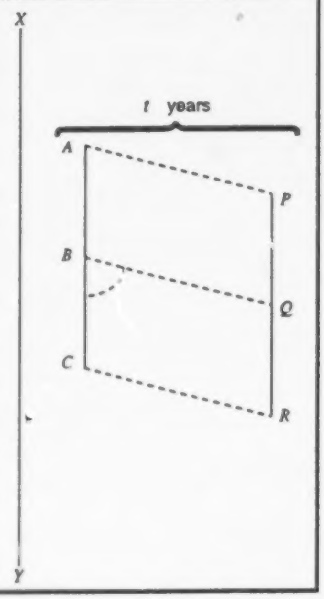
(1) Stage	(2) Teachers	(3) Characteristics	(4) Distribution of Teachers
I. Dame School	Ill-educated, untrained	Unorganized, relatively meaningless symbols; very narrow subject content- 3 R's; very low standards; memorizing all-important	
II. Formalism	Ill-educated, trained	Highly organized; symbols with limited meaning; rigid syllabus; emphasis on 3 R's; rigid methods- «one best way»; one textbook; external examinations; inspection stressed; discipline tight and external; memorizing heavily stressed; emotional life largely ignored.	
III. Transition	Better-educated, trained	Roughly same goals as stage II, but more efficiently achieved; more emphasis on meaning, but it is still rather «thin» and formal; syllabus and text-books less restrictive, but teachers hesitate to use greater freedom; final leaving examination often restricts experimentation; little in classroom to cater for emotional and creative life of child.	
IV. Meaning	Well-educated, well-trained	Meaning and understanding stressed; somewhat wider curriculum, variety of content and methods; individual differences catered for; activity methods, problem solving and creativity; internal tests; relaxed and positive discipline; emotional and aesthetic life, as well as intellectual; closer relations with community; better buildings and equipment essential.	

Figure 1

relevant to the MTEP which involved designing a teacher education program for twelve Malaysian secondary student teachers to facilitate movement within and between stages of development.

The emphasis placed on the importance of formal teacher preparation and subsequent in-service is well illustrated by the distribution of teachers section in column 4 of Figure 1. Line X-Y represents the continuous scale of growth of a system. B is the average teacher's position at a given time, A-C is the range of teachers in the system, t is the number of years over which an attempt is made to reform the system, Q being the point where teacher B may be expected to stand after t years, with P-R being the new range. CBQ is 'the angle of reform'. Clearly any attempt to create too acute an angle of reform is doomed to failure while if the angle is too close to a right angle, the system will simply stagnate. That is, little or no professional development among teachers occurs. Drawing on this approach the MTEP strove to enhance the probability that meaningful change would occur by a) ensuring that the academic preparation level of the student teachers involved was deemed acceptable and b) introducing a collaborative approach in the planning and design of the courses involved in the Project to provide a better angle of reform. This aspect will be elaborated upon in a later section.

Malaysian Educational System

Typical of many developing countries, education in Malaysia is geared towards fostering national unity, catering to manpower

requirements and developing the abilities of students. All schools in Malaysia come under a highly centralized Ministry of Education which directs education from primary to university level. The Ministry is responsible for developing and regulating curriculum, controlling the national examination system and supervising the overall development of education in the country. Private schools are allowed, but are subject to Ministry approval and must conform to certain national requirements.

Recent years have witnessed a number of significant developments. Amongst these have been the full implementation of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction across all levels of education, the nationalization of the externally-set, overseas examination system, and the introduction of new curriculum at both the primary and secondary level. The new secondary curriculum has resulted in the introduction of a number of core subjects (Bahasa Malaysia, English, General Science, History and Moral Education/Religion) consistent with the theme of national unity. All student teachers in the MTEP specialized in teaching English as a second language (TESL) in their university BA program at Brock University, following successful completion of their senior matriculation requirements in a Canadian high school setting.

Using Beeby's model there is little doubt that the characteristics of the current Malaysian educational system overlaps considerably with the Transitional Stage III level in Figure 1. Shifts in Malaysian education reflect a decided movement away from the Formalism stage, characterized by a high degree of

rigidity in most areas, to less restrictive components with better trained teachers and an increased emphasis placed on 'meaning' in the curriculum. Recent curriculum initiatives allow for greater involvement of classroom teachers and are far less restrictive and prescriptive in nature.

While Malaysia is largely self-sufficient in teacher education, there is still a significant number of Malaysian teachers who continue to receive their teacher education abroad. While largely foreign-based, the MTEP sought to integrate both out-of-country and in-country training through a planned collaborative model.

The Malaysian Teacher Education Project

The Malaysian Teacher Education Project (MTEP) was designed as a result of a formal request from the Malaysian Ministry of Education to mount a B.Ed. program for a small group of BA (TESL) students who were to complete their undergraduate studies by the Spring of 1990. Twelve students were accepted into the project in the fall of 1990 even though five of the group had not completed all the requirements of the B.A. It was strongly held that all twelve students proceed with the B.Ed. program intact and then proceed to fulfil all outstanding B.A. requirements. This was agreed to by the M.O.E. After initial consultation with Malaysian officials, Brock University developed a unique Teacher Education Program that encompassed theory, research, curriculum and methodology and practicum. The twelve students received a special

package of pre-service and undergraduate Education courses that were deemed relevant to their needs as indicated by the Malaysian Ministry of Education officials. These courses included an introduction to the education enterprise, curriculum theory and design, the process of teaching, and teaching methods for the secondary classroom. In addition, the field observation and practicum component of the MTEP was divided into two phases: Phase 1, conducted in Canadian classrooms provided an opportunity for students to observe a wide variety of techniques in selected high schools in the Niagara region. During this early phase, students worked closely with cooperating Canadian teachers who acted as teacher-mentors and introduced students to a wide variety of classroom instructional techniques and resources for the teaching of English as a second language. This initial practicum phase, which involved approximately six weeks of school visitation and/or student teaching in a Canadian setting proved most beneficial in providing relevant background for the subsequent practicum phase which was conducted in Malaysia.

A unifying factor in the MTEP was the regularly conducted weekly seminar associated with phase I of the practicum. This enabled students an opportunity to discuss the relevancy and importance of topics dealt with in their program to the needs of Malaysia on an ongoing basis. Every effort was made to relate the scheduled Canadian seminar topic for each week to the Malaysian context. Several seminars were devoted wholly to issues of primary interest to effecting change in education.

The second and most extensive phase of the practicum experience was conducted in selected schools in Malaysia during a 13-week period in the spring and summer of 1991. Discussion with officials from the Malaysian Ministry of Education resulted in the twelve students being assigned, in pairs, to six selected secondary schools in the city of Seremban, within 90 kilometres of the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lampur. In order to ensure continuous supervision throughout the extended practicum, six faculty members from the local Teachers' College were engaged and served as facilitators in the Project, together with two faculty supervisors from Brock University.

Prior to the formal commencement of the practicum a lengthy planning meeting was held for all participants. These included representatives from the cooperating schools, State and Federal Ministry Officials, faculty members from the local Teachers' College, Brock Faculty and the twelve student teachers. There was strong support voiced for the collaborative model developed for the Project and considerable time was spent in clarifying the respective roles of the various participants. For example, it was agreed that the associate or mentor-teacher concept would also be incorporated into the MTEP. This was a new aspect for the Malaysians and there was some hesitancy expressed in assigning associate teachers to each student teacher. These reservations were noted and borne in mind in the selection of the associate teachers. Student concerns regarding the basis for evaluation also received attention at the meeting.

This initial general meeting and subsequent sessions were extremely useful in clarifying the specific parameters of the Project. The attributes of the collaborative teacher education experiment are discussed in the following section.

COLLABORATION IN ACTION

According to Fullan (1985) effective school-based improvement comes about through both a 'top-down' and a 'bottom-up" emphasis in the planning and implementation phases. In the case of the MTEP for example, there was a strong emphasis placed on the active involvement of both National and State level Ministry officials and their provision for support to the participating schools. On the other hand the MTEP also placed a heavy emphasis on the planning and adaptation at the individual school level to support the 'bottom-up' process within the project.

Collaborative planning in the design of the MTEP was an integral part of both the external (top-down) and internal (bottom-up) components of the undertaking. The initiation of the MTEP began as a result of an external request through the Canadian Malaysian Consulate to mount a special program to enhance English Language Teaching in Malaysia. This early level of collaboration outlined the general parameters of the Project and the necessity to jointly plan for change at the school level in the Malaysian context. The actual selection of the program was made on the basis of courses applicable to problems that students would likely encounter upon their return to the Malaysian Educational System and

their value in inducing change into the system in keeping with Beeby's model. The decision that a significant portion of the teaching practicum be conducted in the actual context of Malaysian Schools, where the change was designed to take place, was made in this early, external, planning stage.

A second phase of external, collaborative planning took place in Malaysia between Brock faculty members and National Ministry of Education officials, prior to the actual commencement of the teaching practicum. In addition to updating officials on the nature of the university-based portion of the MTEP and the progress of students on that dimension, this stage of collaboration led directly to the identification of the practicum location, the identification of the cooperating schools and the importance of involving local officials in the implementation of the Project. A meeting was then held with State Ministry officials in Seremban, the site chosen for the practicum, to begin the process of collaboration between all the participants involved in the internal or bottom-up phase of the MTEP.

The collaborative planning that was carried out at the school level proved to be most time-consuming and involved as the roles of the various participants needed considerable clarification. These included the following:

i) State Ministry Officials

In consultation with National Ministry officials, the local Ministry served to coordinate communications among students, supervisors and school personnel and assumed an important

organizational function in the Project. This included setting up the planning meeting of all participants prior to the practicum, conducting a two-day workshop for the student teachers on recent curriculum developments in Malaysia, familiarization and introduction of Brock Faculty to local schools, participating teachers and administrators, identification of cooperating supervisors from the local Teachers College. In addition, the State officials proved most beneficial throughout the extended practicum as local coordinators and liaison personnel.

ii) School Personnel

Student teachers in individual schools were assigned a designated contact person (usually the Assistant Headmaster) and worked closely with one or more Associate Teachers. The role of the Associate Teacher was clarified in the planning meeting to be one of support and consultation rather than evaluative. This concept of a type of mentor-teacher for each student teacher was a new concept for the schools involved.

iii) Teachers' College Supervisors

A faculty member from the local Teachers' College in Seremban was assigned to each of the six schools involved to assist in the supervision of the students in the MTEP. Considerable time was spent by Brock faculty members in determining the role and expectation of these local supervisors. Areas clarified included the degree of lesson plan specification, minimum number of observations to be made during the practicum, familiarization with Brock assessment forms used, and the role of the supervisors in

relation to Brock Faculty supervisors. The collaborative supervisory component proved most beneficial to the Project as it served as a springboard for a number of topics associated with different models of teacher education and opportunities to initiate change in the Malaysian Teacher Education Model.

iv) Brock Faculty

The two Brock Faculty members served as Counsellors for the students throughout the duration of the Project and worked closely with cooperating schools and personnel. Given their involvement with the Project over time they were in an ideal position to counsel and provide feedback on specific lessons taught by the students as well as assist students with personal issues related to competence and confidence in teaching. They also served as a link between the associate teacher and the individual student.

v) Students

The decision to assign two student teachers per school with a common supervisor from the local Teachers' College greatly enhanced collaboration at the classroom level. Students were able to jointly plan, teach, observe and discuss their strategies with support personnel in an open, supportive atmosphere. Innovations introduced at this level by the students probably effect the greatest change in educational practice through such a grassroots, bottom-up approach.

Success of the MTEP

Successful change in education never comes easily and is normally associated with stress and resistance through interaction with peers and support personnel. As an effort to bring about planned change at the classroom level, the MTEP proved no exception in this regard and illustrated the complexity of the change process as a multi-faceted, dilemma-ridden, technical and cultural endeavour, which takes place over a considerable time period. While all students successfully completed the program, any meaningful assessment of the MTEP as a successful experiment in educational change will have to await the consequences of the project on the system over time. As a small scale, planned collaborative model, there is little doubt that the endeavour was well received by Malaysian educational officials.

Much of the resistance to change encountered by the MTEP students was mainly associated with the nature of the school system itself and the rather unexpected cultural readjustment problems that several experienced.

With respect to the first factor, it soon became apparent that, in general, the MTEP students were not adequately prepared for the highly regulated Malaysian school system they encountered. After several years as students in the Canadian system, many expressed disappointment in the rigidity and traditional format of Malaysian schools. The large class size, limited resources, prescriptive curriculum, and general lack of freedom denied the teacher, served to exacerbate the situation. Students were

frustrated with the difficulty encountered in bringing about even the slightest innovation in teaching and the extent to which the system as a whole operated to perpetuate the status quo. It soon became apparent that any 'bottom-up' classroom change would entail a long and tedious process. Culturally the MTEP students were at a disadvantage as several significant changes in education had occurred during their period of study overseas. While efforts to update students during the practicum on recent developments proved useful, they could have profited by a more thorough and intense briefing before returning to Malaysia. Further, and not unexpectedly, the MTEP students, as foreign trained educators, were subject to a high level of expectations by both state and local school personnel. Given that the students were often unable to operate at such an expected performance level, because of a lack of resources, and autonomy, only seemed to contribute to their frustrations.

Recommendations

The MTEP represents a useful signpost for future directions in international teacher education. The collaborative model which incorporates an in-country practicum, following a relevant, overseas component is seen to encompass a number of advantages consistent with positive educational change in developing countries. Recommended changes gained through the MTEP experience would include the following:

1) Inclusion of an initial familiarization period in the home-country of schooling prior to the commencement of the program.
2) An increased exposure to overseas educational practice theory through direct classroom observation and student teaching.
3) Greater sensitivity and modification of overseas academic courses to the needs and context of the home-country's educational system.
4) Retention of a planned, collaborative approach in the design of international education programs.

Summary

The MTEP represents an initial effort to effect change in a traditional setting through a process of planned collaboration and implementation. Predictably the Project encountered a wide variety of situational and cultural factors that are associated with any attempt to introduce change at the classroom level. As a case study the MTEP provides a useful basis for further collaborative efforts in cross-cultural teacher education.

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